
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Landmark/District:	Youth Baseball Academy at Fort DuPont	<input type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	3779 Ely Place, SE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consent Calendar
Meeting Date:	July 26, 2012	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
Case Number:	12-515	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Andrew Lewis	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conceptual Design

The Washington Convention & Sports Authority, in partnership with the Washington Nationals and the National Park Service, propose to rehabilitate an existing recreational area and construct a new 18,000 sq. ft. academic/training facility and a few small ancillary structures to serve as a “baseball academy” for underserved children and youth in Wards 7 and 8. Although the new baseball facility will be located within the boundaries of the landmarked Fort DuPont Park/Fort Circle Parks Historic District, the proposed site has long served as a recreation area and was transferred from the NPS to the District of Columbia specifically for such purposes in 2008. More importantly, the proposed site is far removed from the remnants of the Fort DuPont Civil War earthworks and has been determined to have no potential for intact archaeological resources.

Fort DuPont Park/Fort Circle Parks/John Phillip Sousa Middle School

Fort DuPont was constructed in 1862 to provide protection to the District of Columbia during the Civil War. In 1912, the federal government retained Fort DuPont and some of the surrounding land to establish a park and to create the “Fort Drive” that was recommended by the McMillan Plan to connect all of the Civil War forts that surround the city. Together, the individual forts and the land purchased to complete the proposed, but never completed Fort Drive, comprise the Fort Circle Parks Historic District.

Another important historic property, the John Phillip Sousa Middle School, is located directly across the street from the proposed site of the baseball academy. In addition to being listed in the DC Inventory of Historic Sites and the National Register of Historic Places, the school is a designated National Historic Landmark because of its association with the desegregation of public schools and the civil rights movement. However, the school was constructed in 1950 and is not particularly important from an architectural standpoint.

New Construction & Recreation Area Rehabilitation

As can be seen from the renderings in the information packets, the proposed new construction consists primarily of a two-story building oriented perpendicular to Ely Place and set back from the street so that it retains the existing sense of open space and maximizes the area available for baseball fields. The new facility is also similar in scale to the surrounding two and three-story buildings and it incorporates large glazed areas to reinforce the sense of

openness. The smaller ancillary structures consist of a simple maintenance building, covered bleachers and a press box which are also set back within the proposed complex. The existing areas currently used to play baseball and other sports will also be rehabilitated as a part of the project to establish formal baseball fields.

Evaluation

In 2008, the National Park Service consulted with the DC State Historic Preservation Office in accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Environmental Policy Act and developed an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the impacts of transferring jurisdiction of the project site to the District of Columbia so that the baseball academy could be constructed. The EA also evaluated a number of potential design schemes for a new baseball facility and ultimately determined that none of them were likely to result in any adverse effects/significant impacts on historic properties. This determination also established that the project area does not have potential for intact archaeological deposits because of soil loss due to erosion.

The currently proposed design scheme is in keeping with the previously evaluated design alternatives. And as previously indicated, the proposed site has long been used for recreational purposes and is far removed from the remnants of the Fort DuPont Civil War fortifications. In fact, the fort is nearly one mile away and is buffered by dense trees and vegetation that eliminate the potential for direct and indirect effects on any resources associated with the Civil War Defenses of Washington or any other historic properties located within Fort DuPont Park. The project area contains tennis courts, an ice rink and other buildings and structures but none are historically significant.

John Phillips Sousa School is the only other historic property located near the project site but since that property is significant for its association with the desegregation of public schools rather than its architectural significance, the proposed new similarly scaled baseball academy appears to be compatible with that landmark property as well.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Board approve of the conceptual design for the proposed baseball academy and delegate any remaining restoration and design review to the staff.